

Hurricane Katrina Public Assistance Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Do locals need to declare a local state of emergency?**

No

2. **Our district teachers receive additional pay contractually when they go over a certain number of students per class. If new students (evacuees) cause an increase over contractual class sizes, is this additional pay eligible for reimbursement?**

No. Eligible school expenses include the following: Temporary classrooms, mental health care and incremental security at schools.

3. **When do you expect to know how rental homes/apartments would qualify for reimbursement?**

Rental homes/apartments are not eligible applicants for Public Assistance (PA) reimbursement if they are a for-profit entity. If evacuees are staying in apartments as a permanent shelter, they should register with FEMA for Individual Assistance (IA). IA will provide a housing allowance directly to the evacuee for the evacuee to pay the rental home/apartment.

Public Assistance is available for the temporary placement of evacuees by local governments in rental homes/apartments if the local unit of government contracts with those entities for that service. This temporary placement should be between 10 to 14 days (no more than 30 days). This provides the evacuee a temporary transitional place to stay while they are in the process of registering for IA. Once they have registered for IA and are receiving IA benefits, PA would stop.

So, what I am getting from this question and answer is that FEMA will not reimburse if they are a for-profit entity. Which means what? The only ones that will be reimbursed are those who privately own the rental units? We have units at the former Sawyer Air Force Base that are owned by several companies and some by residents. Aren't most people who have rental units in it for profit? How do they determine "for profit."

Under Public Assistance, only State and Local Governments, certain Private Non-Profit Organizations and Native American Tribal Organizations are eligible applicants. They are the only organizations that can receive payments from FEMA as reimbursement for eligible expenses incurred under the Public Assistance emergency declaration. If an eligible applicant contracted with a property owner (individual or company) to use their facilities as a temporary shelter for the evacuees, then the costs could be eligible. The applicant would be paid as a form of reimbursement for the payments they made to the contracted property owner for the use of their facilities.

4. **Can the state set up a common question/answer location (pass worded or otherwise)?**

All questions should be emailed to Matt Opsommer at opsommem@michigan.gov. Matt will respond to all emails and copy every local program with the response. An email notice will go out when a frequently asked questions area has been posted on the MSP/EMD website.

5. **We have a family of six (6) who drove up in two cars to stay with relatives in Bellaire (Antrim County). They are from Slidell, LA (St. Tammany County). The father is in the Navy and has returned for duty leaving the mother and four (4) minor children. They are in school, having arrived on Sunday 9-4-05. They are registered with FEMA and have a control number. I have copied this to our Red Cross. They have reimbursed under their guidelines a maximum of \$1,565. How do we proceed for additional costs reimbursement and/or is it available if they stay with relatives?**

If evacuees have registered with FEMA for IA and are receiving benefits, PA assistance is not eligible. The assistance would come from IA.

6. **When an applicant receives emergency rental assistance, who determines that the rental assistance they're asking for is fair? Is there a monthly cap for rental assistance? Is there a list or guidance of rates by community?**

The federal government publishes an annual list called the "FMR" which displays the fair market rental rates throughout the country. The figures that are published are a result of surveys conducted in each county to determine the average rental rates in that county. FEMA, in turn, uses the FMR to determine what assistance will be paid to an applicant.

The type of rental housing an individual or family will receive assistance for is determined by the number of individuals. For instance, a single individual or a couple will generally receive assistance for 1 bedroom; a couple with one child, 2 bedrooms; a couple with 2 children, 3 bedrooms; etc.

7. **Once an applicant is registered with FEMA, how long does it take for them to get money in their hand?**

If an individual or family gives authorization for an electronic funds transfer (EFT), they can have their funds within 24 hours of being approved.

However, if they opt to receive a check instead, the time frame will be extended. Here's why: First, the applicant's address must be verified. Next, they must wait for the Treasury Dept. to cut a check. Then the check goes into the mail. Getting the check through the postal system may take several days.

8. **We have set up a Reception Center for processing hurricane victims into our system. We need security there as we have already had some issues. Can we pay deputies from the Sheriff's Department overtime to help out in the center?**

Yes, you can pay them overtime for SECURITY at the reception center.

9. **Can I provide lunches in the Reception Center for the staff there who are unable to get out while assisting evacuees?**

Yes, while they are at the Reception Center assisting evacuees (unless they are receiving a per diem).

10. **Is OT allowed for a Fire Marshal to inspect a school? We had about 24 hours of OT for inspections, consults, and meetings to get that building okayed for a temporary shelter.**

Yes

11. **The County Emergency Manager is being asked to provide a PS or Public Service number to County Public Health in order to receive reimbursement from FEMA.**

A PS number is not required to receive reimbursement from FEMA.

12. **Which agencies will be eligible for reimbursement of expenses from assisting victims of hurricane Katrina?**

Red Cross – No.

Health Department Nurses at shelters - Yes, see guidance for specific eligibility.

County Health Department Staff - Yes, overtime only.

Hospitals for medical treatment - Must be a private non profit providing medical treatment that is listed in FEMA guidance as eligible activity. This information will be provided at applicant briefings.

Optometrists - Yes, if contracted by an eligible applicant. Applicant pays the optometrist and the applicant is reimbursed by FEMA.

Church Organizations providing food, clothing etc. - Case by case basis

13. **The Local EOC is assisting in the coordination of transitional housing and related activities for Michigan Katrina evacuees. Can we cover OT for coordination?**

Yes, OT only.

14. **Does Public Assistance cover volunteers being deployed by the American Red Cross to Louisiana, Mississippi, Hurricane Katrina areas for tetanus shots & any other vaccines or boosters required?**

No, Public Assistance does not cover any costs incurred related to the deployment of individuals for EMAC or the American Red Cross.

15. I understand we need to have a contract between a local subdivision and local hotels if we are going to temporarily house families in them. Does the contract need to be between the county and the hotels or will the contract be between DHS and the hotels?

If the local jurisdiction wants to set up the contract, they can do that. If the local jurisdiction wants to coordinate with local DHS to do it, they can do that as well.

16. If we have temporarily assigned current staff to work on evacuee assignments, can we backfill these positions?

Only backfill overtime is eligible.

17. Katrina evacuees have been placed in transitional housing in Lansing. The city has provided cell phones for them to use. Can the cell phone minutes, rental fees, etc be reimbursed?

Per FEMA (disaster specific guidance #2) cell phone minutes and rental fees are not eligible expenses

18. Also, we called in a technician on OT to get the cell phones distributed. Is the OT an allowable expense?

Per FEMA (disaster specific guidance #2) OT related to ineligible activity is not eligible.

19. There seems to be some confusion as to the eligibility of costs incurred for transportation of evacuees currently in Michigan who wish to be sent to another state. Based on a conference call with FEMA Region 5 on Tuesday, September 13, 2005, the following protocol has been adopted. This information has already been shared with the DHS emergency management representative, Steve Gleason, since he is in the SEOC.

First-The Department of Human Services (DHS) has agreed to take the lead in providing this service in addition to the many others they are already assisting the evacuees with. All inquiries must be coordinated with DHS.

Second-This is not a blanket authorization to provide this service to any evacuee that asks for it. MSP/EMD is asking that the DHS staff member who is working with the evacuee contact the JFO and discuss the specifics with Joel Pepper (SCO) or Matt Opsommer (PAO). Their contact numbers are included at the end of this email.

Third-If after providing the details to the JFO, it is determined this would be eligible, the DHS staff member must verify that the evacuee: 1) has been registered with FEMA and has received their applicant ID number for Individual Assistance benefits, 2) has been provided with all available information regarding any other federal assistance they may be eligible for, 3) that the DHS staff member has made contact with the organization and/or individual(s) identified by the evacuee as the contact for the destination they are being sent to, and the DHS staff member has determined that the person(s) they spoke with is/are aware that the evacuee is being sent to them, that they are aware of the

evacuees condition and any special needs they may have, and that they are able to provide adequate and appropriate housing for the evacuee.

Fourth-A narrative memo regarding the conversation(s) with the individual(s) at the destination location must be prepared and signed by the DHS staff member making the contact, and must be attached to the receipt for the travel voucher (plane ticket or other form of transportation) for eligibility purposes. The memo should identify the relationship between the evacuee and the individual(s) accepting responsibility for the evacuee being sent to them.

20. Are transportation costs from the Gulf Coast Region to the State of Michigan an eligible expense?

This is an eligible expense but, in order to be eligible, the transportation must be coordinated through the State Emergency Operations Center.

21. Does a county need to fill out a Request for Public Assistance (RPA) for each county department or just one to cover the entire county?

A single RPA is required for one county.

Does a Request for Public Assistance cover local jurisdictions within the county?

No, county departments only. Cities, townships, etc. need to fill out their own RPA.

Does a State Department (local Department of Human Services) need to fill out a Request for Public Assistance?

No. State departments fill out one RPA. Local DHS will submit expenses to the main DHS office in Lansing. The main DHS office will apply for reimbursement with FEMA.

Does a district health department have to fill out a Request for Public Assistance for each county it serves or just a single Request for Public Assistance?

A district health department only needs to fill out one RPA.

22. What identifying information do you need to have from an evacuee before providing services?

There is no procedure for identifying evacuees. FEMA has assured us that locals will not be penalized for providing benefits to a person who after the fact is discovered not to be an evacuee.

23. Do county sheriff deputies have to be deployed by the State to the Gulf Coast?

Yes

- 24. What if county sheriff deputies (or any local government employees) go down to the Gulf Coast Region on their own. Will their costs be covered?**

No – this is an EMAC issue. In order to be reimbursed for EMAC, the local agency must be assigned a specific mission by the State Emergency Operations Center.

- 25. If staff who currently work part time (i.e. 20 hours per week) have worked extra hours beyond what they normally work - are the extra hours worked eligible?**

Yes, extra hours worked by part time staff are eligible. Applicants need to keep track of what hours are worked as the regular work week and what hours are worked extra. The regular work hours are not eligible.

- 26. Are vaccinations given to workers being deployed to the Gulf Coast Region an eligible expense?**

No, this is not an eligible PA expense

- 27. Are vaccinations for children not in a shelter, but who need to get into school, eligible?**

County health departments have been directed to administer needed vaccinations to any evacuee and send the costs to the MI Dept of Community Health. MDCH will then apply for FEMA reimbursement.

- 28. Is there some type of voucher the clients will have with them to verify FEMA will be paying the rent?**

No, not from FEMA. They may have a voucher from one of the volunteer agencies to provide short-term housing, but they (the evacuees) receive direct benefits from FEMA's IA program once they are registered and would be paying the landlord just like any tenant.

- 29. What would be an estimated time that FEMA would be paying?**

If the evacuee has a bank account that they can access and can accept Electronic Funds Transfer, they should receive their approved benefits within 24 hours of being registered with FEMA for the IA program. If not, and they are receiving the benefits via check, then it could take from 10-14 days after they are registered.

- 30. Can an Intermediate School District (ISD) apply for all the individual school districts it covers?**

Yes, per FEMA, an ISD can apply for the individual school districts it covers.